

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2025FL004

Name of Service: Once Upon a Time

Address of Service: 11/12 Hansfield Square, Hansfield, Dublin 15

Eircode: D15 YWH7

Name of Registered Provider: AnneMarie McCormack, David McCormack

Service type: Full Day

Date of Inspection: 09/12/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	12	PM	11
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:
Early Years Inspectorate Area 1
2nd Floor, Unit 4/5
The Nexus Building
Blanchardstown Corporate Park
Ballycoolin
Dublin 15 | D15 CF9K

Inspection undertaken by: T. Nelson and L. Jameson

Title: Early Years Inspectors

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable Not applicable.

Description of service

Once Upon a Time is a full day care service located in a residential area of Dublin 15 and is registered to provide early childhood care and education to a maximum of 98 children aged 1 to 6 years old, Monday to Friday. The service operates an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme sessional service from 9.00am to 12.00pm and is one of 11 services operated by the registered provider.

Once Upon a Time operates from a purpose-built premises and has eight care rooms, three of which are currently operating which are all on the ground floor. These include the Senior Wobbler room (12 to 18 months old), Junior Toddler room (18 to 24 months old) and the Senior Toddler room (2 to 3 years old). There are sanitary facilities located off the Senior Wobbler and Junior Toddler and in the hallway adjacent to the Senior Toddler rooms. There is a cot room, staff toilets, an office and a kitchen all located off the main hallway. A fully enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs nine staff to work in the service, including the person in charge, a deputy person in charge, a chef, four staff to work directly in the rooms and two relief staff to provide support across the rooms. There were nine staff present on the day of the inspection including the person in charge, the chef, six childcare staff and an area manager. The registered provider does not work in the service.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was announced and focused on the area of governance and health, welfare and development of child. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the area manager, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that;

- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required.
- (b) A review of the roster showed either the person in charge or the deputy person in charge were rostered to be present during the operational hours of the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and this was outlined in the roster.

(2) The staff roster was reviewed and discussed with the person in charge which established that nine staff were employed to work in the service and these files along with that of the area manager were reviewed.

The registered provider had completed the following checks:

- (a) Seventeen validated written references were available from recent past employers.
 - (b) Three validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff members employed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Nine adults who had lived in a state other than Ireland for six months or more as an adult had international police vetting from that state available for inspection.
- (3) Documentary evidence available showed that all of the checks outlined in (2) had been carried out prior to any of the adults having contact with the children in the service.
- (4) The nine staff who worked directly with children attending the service held the relevant qualifications.
- Five staff held a level 5 qualification.
 - Four staff held a letter from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality stating either recognition of their qualification or their eligibility to practice.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,*

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the following:

- (1) A review of the roster and observation on the day of inspection established that there were an adequate number of adults available to the children attending the service to meet their care needs. These observations are outlined under Regulation 19.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratios were maintained correctly throughout the day of the inspection. For example:
 - There were four staff working in the care rooms providing care to 12 children on the morning of the inspection and 11 children in the afternoon.
 - There were two staff available to cover for staff lunches and provide support where needed.
 - The person in charge and the area manager provided support in the care rooms.
- (8)
 - (a) The review of the staff roster provided for a minimum of two adults to be on the premises during the service's operational hours.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

- (1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-*
- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and*

Compliance Information

- (1)
 - (a) The following examples were observed to facilitate the children's wellbeing, learning and development:

Basic Needs:

- A review of documentation and discussion with the person in charge established that the children received four meals per day: breakfast on arrival, a light meal at 11.00am, a hot meal at 2.00pm and an afternoon snack. On the day of the inspection the children were observed to have a snack of bread,

breadsticks, meat, cheese and apples. An external catering company supplied the hot afternoon meal, where the chef reported alternative meals were available for those with alternative diets.

- Drinks of water were observed to be available during mealtimes and were stored visible in the care rooms and staff were observed to remind children to take a drink throughout the inspection.
- Staff reported nappy changing was scheduled three times daily, and as needed in addition. The nappy change witnessed on the day was observed to be a respectful and pleasant experience for the child, where the staff member used strategies such as requesting permission, used running commentary on the process and engaged in songs.
- Staff were observed to facilitate and encourage children to tend to their personal care such as handwashing after outdoor play and before meals.
- All children had access to the outdoor play area on the day of the inspection.
- Children had access to appropriate and suitable sleep facilities for their age range. Sleep was observed to be organised to meet the needs of the children on the day. For example, a child who displayed signs of tiredness was brought to the cot room for rest and two children who did not wish to sleep at sleep time were taken back to their care room to play.
- Staff reported being aware of those children who had allergies and of the procedures to support their care needs.

Supporting Relationships:

- Respectful and positive interactions were observed between adults and children. The atmosphere in the service appeared relaxed and child centred where children had the freedom to move through their room and choose their play experience.
- Children were encouraged to join in group play for an art activity, facilitating social interactions among the children.
- Parents are given updates on the daily activities of their children via an online software application and on planned events via a monthly newsletter which is emailed and displayed on the walls in the rooms. Parents were observed to come to the care room to collect their children where there was an opportunity for a conversation about their child. Staff reported that the parents are invited to attend the forthcoming Christmas art activity.

- Staff were observed to use positive strategies to support children’s behaviour such as managing transitions in a timely manner, using verbal and visual cues and encouraging and praising positive behaviours.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The furniture provided in the rooms was low level and appropriate for the age range of the children. Toys, equipment and play materials were easily accessible and visible to the children on low-level units.
- Visual imagery was used effectively throughout the care rooms to indicate the daily routine and where things belong. This facilitated communication and can give comfort for children.
- Images of the children and products of their recent mark making activities were displayed in the rooms. This gives a sense of belonging.
- The toys and equipment were grouped into themed interest areas such as construction, home area, reading area, table top area and sand play.
- The outdoor area was fully enclosed and surfaced in artificial grass allowing outdoor play in wet weather. Children were dressed appropriately wearing coats and hats for a comfortable outdoor play experience.
- Children had access to play equipment in the outdoor area such as slides, tunnels, ride-on cars, sand play and blocks for stepping stones.

Programme of Activities:

- Children’s interests and preferences were displayed in the care rooms which informed planning for activities and meals.
- Support staff prepared activities in advance which can help with planned activities and transitions.
- There were short-term plans available for children’s learning, and these plans were reflective of the artwork displayed in the rooms.
- Positive strategies such as running commentary, modelling, feedback and encouragement were observed to nurture and promote children’s development.